

Huguenot Defeats and Success.

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methods of regaining the heretic for the true Church, of retaliating on the persecutor the cruelties which bigotry or tactics dictated. Large tracts of South-western and Central France were turned into a desert. Numerically the Huguenots constituted a small minority of the nation, and they had almost invariably the worst of it in the great pitched battles. Coligny and Condé were no match for Guise and Montmorency as generals. Condé was defeated at Dreux in 1562, all but defeated at St Denis in 1567, defeated again and shot at Jarnac in 1569. Coligny had no better success as a leader in the field, and sustained the most disastrous defeat of all at Montcontour, six months after the disaster at Jarnac. Three years later he fell, at Paris, a victim to the foul treachery of Catherine de Medici and the hatred of the Guises in the terrible St Bartholomew night, when, according to an eye-witness, "the streets were covered with dead bodies, the river stained, the doors and gates of the palace bespattered with blood." There were more defeats under their successors before the military genius of Henry of Navarre definitely turned the tide of disaster at Coutras in 1587. And yet the indomitable Huguenots fought on. They were great in defeat, and their stubborn intensity of perseverance succeeded in wresting from their opponents, time and again, reluctant edicts of pacification more or less favourable to their claims. They were aided by the development of events beyond the French frontier—by the struggle in the Netherlands that engrossed the attention of Philip of Spain, and prevented his active intervention in behalf of their enemies. They could reckon on the good offices and the grudging grants of Queen Elizabeth. Still more providential was the alliance of the Politiques, or moderate Catholics, who combined to enforce the policy of moderation after the massacre of St Bartholomew, and check the Catholic League.

The League, like the Huguenots, became a State within the State, and strove to gain its object even at the expense of allying itself with foreign princes—with Philip and the pope—as did the Huguenots with the English and the Dutch. The Leaguists renounced allegiance to Henry III. after his refusal to submit to its domination and that of the Catholic Parisian democracy, who, sure of the pope and the Church, barricaded